

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a vast mountain range. The foreground shows a dense, green forest covering a mountain slope. In the distance, multiple layers of mountain ridges are visible, creating a sense of depth. The sky is a mix of blue, purple, and orange, indicating a sunset or sunrise.

2022 TN OPTIONS Program Report



**STATE OF TENNESSEE
COMMISSION ON AGING AND DISABILITY**

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January 15, 2022

The Honorable Randy McNally
Lieutenant Governor of Tennessee and Speaker of the Senate
Suite 700 Cordell Hull Bldg.
425 Rep. John Lewis Way N.
Nashville, TN 37243

The Honorable Cameron Sexton
Speaker of the House of Representatives
Suite 600 Cordell Hull Bldg.
425 Rep. John Lewis Way N.
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Lieutenant Governor McNally and Speaker Sexton:

The OPTIONS for Community Living program was created by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1999 to serve older individuals and adults with disabilities that do not qualify for Medicaid long-term care services. OPTIONS is an entirely state funded program, which is used for personal care, homemaker services, home-delivered meals, and transportation services.

Pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. §71-2-105(a)(11), the Tennessee Commission on Aging and Disability is required to provide an "updated report and analysis of the waiting list for the state OPTIONS program" annually to the Tennessee General Assembly.

Enclosed you will find a copy of this year's updated report, which includes data and a brief analysis regarding the waiting list for the program.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of Tennessee's aging population.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Dunn".

James Dunn
Executive Director
Enclosure: 2022 Tennessee OPTIONS Program Report

For members' benefit, the report and analysis are laid out as follows:

- (1) A description of the OPTIONS program,
- (2) The current funding level for the program,
- (3) The actual number of people on the waiting list for the program, and
- (4) An analysis of the waiting list.

OPTIONS Program Description

The OPTIONS for Community Living program was created by the Tennessee General Assembly in 1999 to serve older individuals and adults with disabilities that do not qualify for Medicaid long-term care services. OPTIONS is a state funded program. The funding can be used for personal care, homemaker services, home-delivered meals, and transportation services. The average annual cost of OPTIONS is approximately \$3,200 per individual. As of November 30, 2021, there are 1,857 individuals presently enrolled in the OPTIONS program.

Due to COVID-19, many individuals placed their traditional services on hold due to concerns related to the spread of the coronavirus. Additional services were provided to ensure the needs of individuals in the program were met, such as purchase and/ or delivery of groceries and household supplies, and medical equipment and supplies. In addition to client requests to place their services on hold, provider and provider workforce shortages have been reported statewide.

The Current Funding Level

In FY 2022, TCAD received \$9,590,800 in state appropriations for the OPTIONS program.

Waiting List

As of the end of November 2021, the waiting list numbers for OPTIONS as defined by the nine Area Agencies on Aging and Disability (AAAD) are as follows:

AAAD Name	# of Individuals on Waiting List at End of November 2021 for Category A & B
First TN	819
East TN	734
Southeast TN	234
Upper Cumberland	631
Greater Nashville Regional Council	627
South Central	271
Northwest TN	393
Southwest TN	31
Aging Commission of the Mid-South	241
Total	3,981

Analysis of the Waiting List

Individuals obtain OPTIONS services by contacting their local AAAD through TCAD's Information and Assistance line (1-866-836-6678). Any individual that requests in-home services is screened on the telephone using an intake screening. The intake screening collects information that identifies risk factors or conditions that indicate the need for long-term supports and services. Screened individuals who have a total score of three activities of daily living (ADLs)/instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) limitations or a total score of two ADL/IADL limitations with documented cognitive impairment who request in-home services may be placed on the OPTIONS waiting list. Those individuals that qualify for Medicaid are referred to the TennCare program. These guidelines are consistent with the minimum requirements to receive services.

After the intake screening, individuals are placed on the waiting list based on a screening prioritization score placing those with the highest score at the top of the waiting list. The screening prioritization score considers their ADL/IADL score, the amount of informal/formal support they currently have, overall health, and income level. No individual is denied services due to income; however, there is a sliding scale in place for individuals that have a higher income. Individuals that the AAAD can expect to serve within the next 18 months are placed on the Category A waiting list allowing AAADs to maintain contact with them. TCAD staff in conjunction with AAAD staff work to determine the number of individuals that can be served in Category A based on trends and data analysis. Those individuals who are not expected to be served within the next 18 months are placed in Category B and contact is maintained on a less frequent basis. The number of individuals needing access to OPTIONS services continues to grow. Funding for OPTIONS services is limited. Provider staffing shortages have resulted in an inadequate labor force of caregivers.

Enrollment in the OPTIONS program is driven by the amount of available funding and providers. When there is an opening available, individuals are pulled from the waiting list based on their screening prioritization score. Individuals with the highest risk are pulled off first. An assessment is then completed for further information about their health and nutritional status, financial status, functional limitations, home environment, and social support system. The AAAD OPTIONS counselor along with the individual and family, if available, then develop a plan to deliver in-home services.

Individuals are removed from the waiting list for various reasons, including enrolling into the OPTIONS program, their condition improves, or their condition deteriorates to the point of Medicaid services eligibility.

Summary

The OPTIONS program based on the foregoing factors listed above have contributed to an extended waiting list according to our AAADs. There are currently 3,981 individuals waiting for services. Provider shortages and provider workforce shortages are being reported statewide. With the average annual cost of services being \$3,200 per individual, it is estimated that it may cost \$12,739,200 to provide services to these individuals. TCAD, in partnership with the AAADs, will continue using best practices to maximize the resources and current funding available.

For additional information please contact Mason Devers, Communications Director and Legislative Liaison, Mason.Devers@tn.gov or Robb Cagle, Legislative Liaison, Robb.Cagle@tn.gov.